

NEOCON EAST Moves To Mid-December

by Brad Powell

Location, location, location is still the rule in real estate matters, even though no capital expenditures is what we have been hearing most frequently for the past 15 months. And for sure there is nothing like a change of venue to mess up a good thing. Look what happened to **NeoCon West** after it moved from its original convention center location into the LA Mart. Sad or pathetic – pick your adjective – but for sure, we miss a West coast show!

On the upside, a change of venue can work miracles and one occurred when the **Merchandise Mart** took over the Javits Center (NYC)-based Interplan, re-christened it **NeoCon East** and, in 2003, moved it to the Baltimore Convention Center. Perhaps the only good thing to come out of the notion of regional NeoCons has been NeoCon East – we don't include IIDEX, redubbed IIDEX/NeoCon Canada – and this has turned out not only good, but brilliant.

Still, we were not happy to hear that NeoCon East is moving from Oct. 28-28 in 2009 to Wednesday/Thursday, **December 15-16, 2010**; this is at the end of our broadcast year and we had hoped to be loafing by them. Not to worry, said the Merchandise Mart's Senior Vice President **Mark Falanga**, the scheduling change is for this year only. Of course, that depends on factors beyond the Mart's control. It's not as though an contract interiors event is the most important for a convention center, or even the Mart. The normal October scheduling has been bumped

before by the Baltimore powers that be, after all, they have a city's economy to help along.

As everyone knows, NeoCon East has a local identity, that of government work, something that has become of increasing interest – follow the money – because of the conjunction of two circumstances: recessionary periods and the GSA Design Excellence program.

This leads to the sensible scheduling of NeoCon East around federal government budgeting, whose fiscal year begins

October 1. As a result, it is not wise to schedule events during September, at the very end of the fiscal year. On the other hand, even as the fellow who goes grocery shopping on an empty stomach and plenty of cash is likely to fill his cart, government agencies with the \$\$ of newly replenished budgets dancing in their heads are likely to be more interested shoppers. Thus, while the flush of overflowing coffers and unsatisfied dreams may have diminished somewhat by December, it is not too immodest to suggest that the good cheer of the holidays will at least partially compensate.

When we received the save the date message, we were hoping that the entourage that comes to NYC to celebrate the Interior Design magazine **Hall of Fame** would be able to grab an Amtrak to D.C. for the Best NeoCon East ever. But, with the Hall of Fame scheduled for December 1st (the first day of Chanukah - I'm sure they will provide the candle), you would have to have an awful lot of shopping to do to make that work.

Well, even without that kind of influx, the Mart says that more than 7,500 are expected to attend the show for "two exciting days of new products, special events - including a holiday celebra-

tion- and educational offerings."

"NeoCon East is positioned to have a continued growth trajectory, just as it has since it began in 2003," said Mr. Falanga, and he really does talk like that, you know, not giving much detail on the exact direction of the "growth trajectory." "Taking place during the first quarter of the 2011 fiscal year," he continued, "government buyers are flush with new budgets and are looking for products to fill their organization's needs, and NeoCon East provides them with the perfect environment."

NeoCon East is an important trade show for the Federal design community because it features Government Interiors, which focuses on products and services geared to federal government procurement specifiers. According to the Mart, this year's December dates are endorsed by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), and are supported by the show's exhibitors. At NeoCon East 2010, GSA will host its **Quality Partnership Council (QPC)** meeting, which is designed to foster a common understanding among customers, contractors, and GSA.

The Mart says that NeoCon East has more than 250 exhibitors in 240,000 sq.ft. of exhibit space, and more than 50 CEU accredited seminars. Best of all, this regional NeoCon is very popular with the regional A&D communities, and the annual **State of the Industry** panel always provides a rare public glimpse into the thinking of architects and designers. We believe that this could be an panel of high national interest if the panelist would work a little harder on their preparation, not to appear ungrateful for their willingness to share their thoughts.

For more information, about NeoCon East, visit www.neoconeast.com or call 800.677.6278 (MART). ■

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NeoCon[®] East